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Ours but to do and die"
We few—we happy few
We band of Brothers.

AN ADDRESS

BY

GENL. BRADLEY T. JOHNSON

BEFORE THE

CONFEDERATE SOCIETY OF ST. MARY'S

AT LEONARDTOWN

March 1894.

BALTIMORE :
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DEFENSE OF THE SOUTH.

On March 22 the Confederate Association of St. Mary's county met at Leonardtown, and Brigadier-General Bradley T. Johnson of the Maryland Line delivered an address that he styles his "valedictory." Judge J. Parran Crane read a memoir of Warren F. Moore, who fell at Gettysburg. Capt. George Thomas, president of the association, then introduced General Johnson, who spoke as follows:

"When Captain Thomas invited me to address this association last fall I was obliged to decline to do it at that time, but wrote him that I wanted to make the address, for there were some things that ought to be said before we all are dead, that St. Mary's was the place to say them in, and that I was the man to say them.

"The mere point of personal gallantry and chivalry is not of great importance in my mind to our reputations with posterity.

"All men of our breed are brave and generous. '*C'est dans le sang*'—it's in the blood—as they said of the French conscripts at Ansterlitz. We will deserve no credit for that. We come of game-cock stock. I never saw a Marylander a coward. But I do not want to be recorded along with the rest of you, as Don Quixotes, much less as Dalgettys.

"I want posterity to consider us as sound-headed as well as warm-hearted and I want them to understand that our course in leaving our native State was dictated by reason as well as by enthusiasm—that we were perfectly right in doing as we did, and were actuated by the highest motives of intelligent patriotism. That we failed was no fault of ours—we did our full duty, and we will die in the conviction that if we had it to do over we should do just as we did then—only more efficiently, as experience has shown us how to do. With this feeling in my heart, I have prepared a statement of the reasons which controlled or directed our action in 1860-'61, and I put them on record as my statement of my case, for this is the last speech I shall ever make in St. Mary's—on this subject.

RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENSE.

“The common right of self-defense has been the muniment of English liberty for a thousand years. Every man’s house was his castle, his rights were his own and no man could interfere with them from king to constable without warrant of law.

“When Great Britain acknowledged the independence of the States she recognized each by name as an independent and sovereign State. Maryland was as sovereign as England or France.

“These sovereign States formed a government to protect their liberty and independence, but they never gave up the right to change their form of government at their pleasure. It was to be a government of equal States and equal laws, but each State must of necessity be the sole and final judge as to when she would require other guarantee and protection of the liberty of the people.

“The institution of slavery is the organization of labor in all primitive societies. It always has been so and always will be so. It is one of the great forces by which savage races are civilized and civilized people subdue nature and develop arts, science and thought. It was the basic institution of the American colonization.

“New England enslaved the Indians. We never did. But African savages were civilized here, and civilized by the control of the civilized race—its religion, its morals and its measures.

“There never has been an equal number of Africans as highly developed as that portion of the race living in America, and this development was the result of American servitude.

“When the invention of the cotton gin promoted an immense production of cotton an enormous increase of power, prestige and moral force resulted to the States where the institution of servitude was developed. The habit of control and the practice of masterdom made the Southern man reliant, positive and forceful. He controlled the formative period of the new society. He formed the Union under the Constitution, and he directed the policy of the Union for the first 70 years of its existence. His power was the logical result of the institution by which he was formed. His whole energy was directed to the art of governing. The assertion of intellectual predominance and the exhibition of

material power in the South produced irritation, envy and ill-will. For 30 years prior to 1860 the North had been gradually making up its mind for the overthrow of the predominance of the South.

CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES DISREGARDED.

“The first attempt to organize public opinion in the North for this supreme effort was in the Fremont election of 1856. This failed as an achievement. It succeeded as a beginning. And, in 1860 the Northern States combined together to seize the common government without laws, and they succeeded. Under the form of the Constitution and the provisions of the laws the Government of the United States was taken possession of by the Northern States. This meant that hereafter they would make such laws as they thought fit and protect such rights and such people as they thought proper. It was a revolution of a government of equal rights and the establishment of the domination of the strong over the weak. It was the overthrow of the government of consent and the setting up of the government of force. If the minority States submitted, they would hold everything hereafter at the pleasure of the majority. The guarantees of the Constitution were swept away, for the North would construe the present Constitution at its pleasure and amend it at its discretion.

“Now absolute government is government without check, whether administered by a czar, a sultan or a sectional majority, and absolute government is inconsistent with liberty, peace and order. The Southern States promptly resolved that their rights, interests and liberty required that they should change the form of government under which they and their ancestors had been living for 70 years and form a new government satisfactory to themselves. They had this undoubted right. Whether it be called secession, revolution or rebellion, it is the fundamental principle of American liberty, declared in the Declaration, announced by all the courts, proclaimed in every bill of rights of every State, North or South, old and new, that all government rests upon the consent of the governed.

“There was no disunion party in Maryland. There were few secessionists here. With the younger men of the State I person-

ally was ardent in opposition to the unconstitutional government of Lincoln, and advocated uniting Maryland to the fortunes of the South. But we made absolutely no impression on public sentiment in this State. Geography was against us. The Chesapeake, the Potomac, the Patuxent opened us to the guns of the Northern ships and we were powerless to move as a State. When Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to suppress insurrection in the South, that call compacted the South into a stone wall. It lighted the beacon fires on every hill. It made every valley echo with the tramp of armed men marching to the defense of their homes. In a night the issue was changed from union or disunion to subjugation or resistance.

AN OLD ISSUE.

“It was the issue of the Barons with King John — the issue of the Commons with King Charles — of the Colonies with King George. The right to resist by force illegal invasion of right. That was the issue presented to Maryland and Virginia in April, 1861. Institutions, climate, environment, political and moral, have evolved on the Chesapeake and Potomac a type of character as distinct and strongly defined as any in history. The Marylander is born to believe that every man has the right to his opinions. The consequence is that courtesy must be the rule of intercourse and chivalry the principle of action. Generous, warm-hearted, high-minded, he despises low things and mean men. He turns his back on neither friend nor enemy. His sword and his arm, his blood and his purse have ever been at the disposal of those he loved. Prudence forms no part of his plan of life, and selfishness is a sentiment unknown to his heart. What he loves, he believes in ; what he believes in, he stands by, absolutely regardless of cost or consequence.

“When, therefore, in 1861 the issue was presented to the Marylander whether he should stand by, in base ease and inglorious safety, while his blood and kin in Virginia were dying like men, resisting the invasion of their homes and the subjugation of their liberties, he hesitated not a moment, and with the kiss of his mother and the blessing of his father he flew to the assistance of Virginia.

"I know no such instance of generous chivalry, of such noble self-sacrifice in all history. Not when Peter led the flower of Christendom to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from the pollution of the heathen — not when the Knights of the Round Table rode the Quest of the Holy Grail was there such an absolute abnegation of self, ever such devotion to honor and duty. In the Maryland Line there were not 20 men who had any property interest in slavery. There was not a man who sought promotion or advantage of fortune. They went to stand by their friends in trouble, to defend rights inherited from free ancestors.

"Those of us who were of mature age had distinct ideas of policy and of the future. We believed that the interests of Maryland required that she should become one of the Confederate States. We did not believe she would be safe in the hands of the lawless democracy of the North. We knew that our people had the same feelings and that we fully and fairly represented them ; and we knew that the only way to secure that future Union was to hold for the State a representation in the armies of the South.

"With that purpose firmly fixed in my mind, I refused to accept a commission of lieutenant-colonel from the Governor of Virginia and was mustered into the Army of the Confederate States as captain. And never in that glorious epoch and fiery trial did we cease to maintain a Maryland organization, under a Maryland flag, in the Army of the Confederate States. Gen. George H. Stuart, Capt. George Thomas and the rest were earnest, faithful and devoted to this end and we succeeded in writing the name of the State on the brightest pages of American history. The existence of the Maryland Line of the Army of Northern Virginia is not recorded on a single page of the archives of Maryland. Not a single honor decorates our gallant comrades ; not a recognition of the self-sacrifice, devotion and chivalry of the Maryland Confederate has ever been made by the powers that have controlled Maryland for 34 years. But these men were the best soldiers she has ever had. They fought more battles, won more glory, achieved more victories than the old line of the Revolution.

THE CAUSE LIVES ON.

"But Christ was crucified and the Apostles and martyrs were stoned to death. The cause of justice, love and charity did not

perish on Calvary, but has ever since lightened human sorrow and softened human suffering. So the surrender at Appomattox proved nothing except that two is more than one, and the cause of the Confederacy lives today as noble, as high, as vigorous as it was when Lee charged in the Wilderness or Jackson died at Chancellorsville. It was the cause of human liberty, of the right of every man to think as he pleases, to work as he chooses and to enjoy the life God has given him in his own way, not molested by State or Church.

“That cause has frequently gone down before ‘vis major’—overwhelming force—but with the race from which we spring it has never been abandoned; but the struggle is transnitted from sire to son, from generation to generation, ever living, never ceasing. When the American Colonies resisted with arms George III.’s attempt to ‘save the Union’ by the bayonet, William Pitt and Edmund Burke both saw and believed that the cause of the Colonies was the cause of constitutional liberty in England, and that, if the Americans were subjugated, Englishmen would never recover their liberties save by bloody revolution. And that is the opinion of all the modern British historians.

“The subjugation of America would so enormously have strengthened the crown that the Hanoverian system of government would have been introduced, as George always desired to do. Habeas corpus and trial by jury would have been obliterated as they had been in America. The House of Commons would have been paralyzed and government would have become the personal appanage of the King and his coterie. The rights of the people, the common rights of Englishmen, would have only been secured by a bloody struggle. They were saved that by the success of the Americans. So I believe, and I believe that history will so record that the struggle of the Confederate States to establish a government of the people by their own consent was the effort to perpetuate popular government and public liberty on this Continent. The failure of it will yet be atoned for in untold evil and future woe. If the Southern States had succeeded the Constitution of the United States would have been amended and the weak points pointed out by experience would have been strengthened and one State after another would have joined the Confederacy until the Union would have been restored stronger, better fortified than ever.

RULE OF CLASS.

"But the North succeeded in overthrowing Constitutional Government of all the people and in establishing the rule of a section and of a class, and you can see day by day government more and more under the control of selfishness. It has passed under the dominion of a heartless, vulgar, soulless plutocracy, who use power to get more money and use money to get more power.

"Within a few years you have seen insurrections of labor in the States put down by troops. There were more soldiers at Homestead than Washington had for the defense of Philadelphia, and more at the railroad strike the same summer in New York than defended that city from Sir William Howe. In future government will be controlled by the property class—that is, the large property class, and they will control the paid military force.

"But an end comes to all that, as it did in Rome and Egypt, and Assyria and in France in 1793, and is coming in Germany today. Like causes produce like effects and logic is eternal and inexorable, and when Anarchy with red riot rules the cities of the North their people will call on the Confederates to save them.

"The great crime against justice, right and civilization was the sudden, brutal, unnecessary abolition of African slavery. Six generations of education and control of savages by Christian white men and women have evolved a body of negroes the most highly civilized, the most Christianized, the most intellectual, the most moral that have ever lived in all the tide of time. The abolition at once struck from them the protection of the superior race and exposed them weak, ignorant and half savage to the fierce competition of selfishness, of greed, of un-Christian avarice, and it is as certain as that the sun shines that the future of the American African is shrouded by disaster and clouded by gloom.

"The failure of the Confederacy brought sorrow and suffering to white and black alike.

"I have made this statement of our case to posterity. It is crude, but it contains the substance of what I want to say. Not a page of contemporaneous record in this State makes mention of the Maryland Line in the Army of Northern Virginia. But it

made the most glorious page of Maryland history. It fought more battles, lost more men, stood fast in more disasters than any Marylanders ever anywhere before. The manual of arms of the First Regiment, before the batteries at the first Cold Harbor, was an exhibition of coolness and fortitude greater than that of the line under Lord Stirling at Long Island. The charge of the Second Regiment at Gettysburg showed more headlong dash and brilliant daring than that of the line under DeKalb at Camden.

“The fight at Front Royal equaled in courage and exceeded in results that at Cowpens.

“But we make no complaint. We never fought for pay or promotion and, therefore, have never been disappointed. But we will have our reward in the future.

“One hundred years from now who will be able to call the roll of Governors, Senators, Congressmen of that epoch? Who will remember the men who have ruled Maryland during this generation? But 100 years from now every schoolboy will recount with throbbing hearts and quickened pulses the exploits of the Maryland Line of the Army of Northern Virginia, and, my friends, we were the Maryland Line! The British legend tells how St. Joseph brought the true cross to Britain and buried it in the vale of Avalon; and when Arthur died he was borne by 12 queens to Avalon, where he rests until the direst stress of Britain calls him to her rescue. This name of ‘Blessed Avalon’ is the original name of our State, and, to my heart, St. Mary’s is the Avalon of Maryland.

“Here the true cross of devotion to duty, justice, liberty and honor is planted. Here the Arthur of our chivalry lies sleeping—not dead—and when, in the future, Maryland needs men—manly men, high-minded men, generous men, who scorn tricks and mean ways and things—her call will rouse to her protection the knights of Avalon—the men of St. Mary’s—sons of the Maryland Line.”





